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Sacramental EXERCISES.

OR, THE

Christian's Employment

Before, At, and After

THE

Lord's Supper.

To which is added,

A Discourse of Hearing:

BEING A

FAREWEL-SERMON

Preach'd in *Lime-Street*, *Sept.* 29. 1706.

By JABEZ EARLE.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

TO

Mrs. Suſanna Langford.

MADAM,

I *Humbly deſire Your Acceptance of the following Sheets, as a Teſtimony of the very ſincere Reſpects of one whom You have Honoured with undeſerved Favours, and uncommon Encouragements. I am very well aſſured that the*

Regard You ſhew to the Miniſters of the Goſpel proceeds intirely from Your Love to their Maſter; and as Your Goodneſs has extended it ſelf to more than one Kingdom, and never been confin'd to one Party, ſo I doubt not but Your Reward will be full and overflowing. Go on, Madam, to follow the bright Example of Your Anceſtors, who have not only ſtood firm to the Proteſtant Intereſt, but dar'd own the deſpiſed

Cauſe of a People who are it ſeems thought unfit to be truſted with the loweſt Part of the Adminiſtration, under a KING *to whom they are Unanimouſly and Inviolably Attach'd, and for whom they are ready to Sacrifice all that is dear to them. It is to the Honour of the* Langfords *and* Uptons *that they have not been aſham'd of the Intereſt of the Diſſenters in Parliament, any more than out of it, and Dying as well*

as Living were Generous in the Support of it, and yet were not Guilty of confining Religion to a Party. May, You, Madam, be long an Ornament to Your Profeſſion, and as You value Your ſelf more upon the Piety than Quality of Your Family, may You at laſt meet thoſe Holy Souls, who are gone before You in that Better Country, where you will know no more Sorrow, but Everlaſting Joy ſhall be upon your Head, and

the

the Days of your Mourning ſhall be ended. *Inſtead of Praiſing You, I chooſe thus to pray for You, as becomes, Madam,*

Your moſt Obliged,

moſt Obedient,

and Humble Servant,

J. EARLE.

THE

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Sacramental EXERCISES.

Chap. I.

The Chriſtian *convinc'd, that its his Duty to come to the* Lord's-Table.

DO this in Remembrance of me. 1 Cor. 11. 25. It is the Voice of my Lord; and leſt I ſhould think it was directed only to his Twelve Diſciples, or the *Coriſtians* of the Firſt Ages, St. *Paul* aſſures me, that this Ordinance is to run Parallel with Time, and by it the Church is to *ſhew forth* Chriſt's *Death 'till he come.* Conſider, O my Soul! Is the *Lord at hand?* Will he *ſurely come quickly?* How ſhall I anſwer it in that Day, that I have neglected ſo expreſs a Command? A Command not couch'd in Ambiguous and Uncertain Terms, but deliver'd in as Plain and Poſitive Expreſſions as any in the Bible. *Sure I am more Brutiſh than any Man, and*

have

have not the Underſtanding of a Man! I have profeſs'd a mighty Reſpect to the Authority of my Redeemer, and a vaſt Reverence for his Laws, but how unaccountably have I manag'd! As tho' I were to chuſe what Commands I would pleaſe to obey, and were veſted with a diſpenſing Power, ſuperior to the Obligation of his Precepts, to whom *all Power*

Mat. 28. 18. *is given both in Heaven and in Earth.*

Bluſh, O my Soul, and and be aſham'd at ſo inconſiſtent a Conduct! Either Chriſt is thy Prince and Lawgiver, or He is not. If not, profeſs thy ſelf an Infidel, and renounce thy Baptiſm. If he be, obey him in all that he requires; and either believe that he has not made it thy Duty to Remember him, or yield a Chearful Subjection in this, as well as other Inſtances.

When he has ſaid, *Do this*, either He does not mean what he ſays, or does not ſpeak to thee; or elſe thy Diſobedience is at once inexcuſable and unaccountable.

Can the Words be wreſted? Is any *Sophiſtry* capable of conteſting their Senſe? What can *Do this*, ſignifie leſs than a Poſitive Command? Or, how can the Will of my Prince be ever ſignify'd, ſo as to oblige me, if ſo plain Terms are by any Cavil to be eluded?

But

But does He ſpeak to me? If I were a true Diſciple, I were indeed within the Compaſs of the Law, and muſt be either a Communicant or a Rebel.

Conſider, O my Soul, and don't raſhly daſh thy Hopes to eſcape thy Duty. 'Tis true, I am not ſuch a Chriſtian as I ſhould be: But am I willing to have my Name miſſing in the Book of Life? Can I be content to reſign my Birth-right, and own that I have neither Lot nor Portion in the Son of God? Would I be paſs'd by, when the *Lord ſhall count, and write up the People?* Either I am a Chriſtian, or I am not: If I am, *This Commandment is for me:* If I am not, what am I? A Child of Wrath, and a Subject of the Devil? And is ſuch a Condition tolerable? Let me give up my ſelf to Chriſt immediately: Make no arrying, O my Soul, leſt the Avenger of Blood overtake thee; and leſt if thou trifle to Day, thou be loſt to Morrow. If I have been but *almoſt perſwaded to be a Chriſtian* hitherto, its high Time that I make an abſolute, unreſerved Surrender of my ſelf to Chriſt preſently, without any farther Delay; and then let what I have done here in Secret, be publickly own'd and avouch'd at the Lord's Table. Pſal. 87. 6.

And

'And now, Lord, *All my Deſire is before thee:* I am convinc'd of my Duty, and dare no longer diſobey. Oh! forgive me, that I have rebell'd ſo long! I have been invited to thy Table, and fooliſhly neglected many an Opportunity of ſtrengthening and refreſhing my Soul. I have been commanded to attend in Remembrance of Him who deſerves never to be forgotten, and by my neglect have at once pour'd Contempt upon thy Authority, and ſlighted his Love who *loved me, and gave himſelf for me.*

'I bleſs thee, that I am in ſome Meaſure ſenſible of my Error, and am come to a Reſolution, that I will have Reſpect to this, as well as other Commands. The Time paſt ſhall ſuffice me to have lived in the Omiſſion of ſo plain a Duty, and the Neglect of ſo glorious a Priviledge. Oh! *keep it upon the Imagination of my Heart for ever*, and let me be confirm'd in thoſe good Purpoſes, which thy own Spirit has led me to form, and no leſs Power than His can help me to keep.

'I am indeed unworthy, but acknowledge the Inſufficiency of that Plea, againſt a Poſitive Command. I am unworthy, but muſt not therefore refuſe thy Kindneſs, I hope I am in Chriſt, tho' the meaneſt Soul that relates to Him,

'and

' and therefore cannot any longer want an
' Ordinance; in the Uſe of which, I hope
' *to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of*
' *my Lord.*

' Or, if I have hitherto deceiv'd my
' ſelf, and *walk'd in a vain Shew*, I now de-
' ſire to accept the Goſpel-Offer, to own
' my Baptiſmal Covenant, to avouch Thee,
' O Father, Son and Spirit, to be my God,
' my All, my Everlaſting Portion. Upon
' my Bended Knees I now accept an Of-
' fer'd Saviour, and call Heaven and Earth
' to witneſs, that as far as I can judge, I
' am ſincere. And this I would declare in
' the Preſence of thy People, begging
' with ſome Hope and Confidence, that I
' may be accepted now, and found in the
' Number of the Faithful at laſt.

' O direct me in all the Steps I am to
' take; and let me ſee my Way, and fol-
' low it, and have Comfort in the iſſue,
' thro' the Merits and Mediation of my
' Lord and Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

CHAP. II.

The Chriſtian *reſolv'd to offer Himſelf to the* Communion.

NOW, O my Soul, thou haſt *opened thy Mouth to the Lord, and canſt not*

go

back! Thy next Duty is to apply thy ſelf to the Miniſter, who is the
1 Cor. 4. 1. *Steward of theſe Myſteries*, that if he judge thee meet, he may admit thee to the Holy Solemnity. Let me not be fooliſhly baſhful, much leſs act the Hypocrite: but uſe the utmoſt Frankneſs with my Spiritual Guide: That he may be able to paſs the better Judgment upon my Caſe, let me ſtate it fairly; neither pretend to what I have not receiv'd, nor deny what I have. *This* would be Baſe Ingratitude; *That* Impious Mockery Freely open thy Breaſt, and unboſom thy Soul: Tell him thy Deſires, and their Motives; Confeſs thy Fears, Doubts and Jealouſies, beg his Prayers, and reverence his Judgment. If he ſhould think thee unfit, ben't provok'd nor diſcourag'd, but take his Counſel, and wait with Patience, till he judge thee ſufficiently inſtructed and duly qualify'd. If he expreſs his Satisfaction, don't diſtruſt him, but believe him a more capable judge of thy Caſe than thou art thy ſelf. Not that thou ſhouldſt eſteem him infallible: It's his Maſter's Province to ſearch Hearts: But ſure his Judgment deſerves the ſame Regard as a Phyſician's about thy Body, or a Lawyer's concerning thy Eſtate. Be faithful in the Account of thy ſelf, and doubt not but he'll be faithful

ful in delivering his Opinion. And with his Faithfulneſs thou mayſt expect Tenderneſs, Condeſcenſion and Compaſſion, in Imitation of the *Chief Shepherd*, who is *meek and lowly in heart, who will not quench the ſmoaking Flax, nor break the bruiſed Reed.* Mat. 11. 29.

'Oh! that God who has convinc'd me 'of my Duty, and brought me to a Reſo-'lution, would help me to be open and 'ſincere. Let me not go about to impoſe 'upon thy Miniſter; which would be juſt-'ly interpreted as an Attempt to impoſe 'upon my Lord himſelf, *whoſe Eyes are as 'a Flame of Fire*; who can't be *deceived*, 'as *knowing what is in Man*; and will not 'be *mock'd*, as being a *Jealous God*. O 'give me Freedom, that I may utter what 'I have felt. Give me Humility, that I 'mayn't be aſhamed to diſcover thoſe Fol-'lies and Imperfections that may be at the 'Bottom of my Doubts and Scruples. Give 'me a teachable Diſpoſition, that I may 'not deſpiſe Inſtruction. Help me to re-'member the Relation, in which theſe 'Under Shepherds ſtand to 'the *Great Shepherd and Bi-* 1 Pet. 2. 25. '*ſhop of Souls.*

'Let me not deſpiſe his Judgment of 'my Caſe, nor yet lay too great a Streſs 'upon it, remembring that Miniſters may

'accept

'accept where God may reject, and admit
'thoſe to the Sacrament, as qualify'd for
'Communion with the Church, who yet
'ſhall be found unworthy Receivers, as
'not having a *Wedding-Garment*.

'Oh direct thy Servant, that he may
'deal prudently and tenderly, and yet
'withal, faithfully. Let him be duly ap-
'priz'd of my Caſe, and paſs ſuch a Ver-
'dict as the great Judge will ratify.

CHAP. III.

After haing been approv'd by the Mini-niſter, *and allow'd to Communicate.*

BE thankful, O my Soul, that God has heard the Voice of thy Supplication! His Miniſter has dealt tenderly and faithfully with thee, has encourag'd thy Deſign, promis'd the Aſſiſtance of his Prayers, given thee Inſtruction, and ſuitable Advice, and nothing more remains, but thy Actual Preparation for that Holy Ordinance.

But, O ſee to it, that thy Heart be right. 'Tis a deceitful Heart thou haſt to manage: Look to thy ſelf, that thy *Goodneſs* be not as the *Morning Cloud*, and *early Dew*, that ſoon paſſeth *away*. Remember the Warning the Miniſter gave thee, that thou ſhouldſt

ſhouldſt not act in ſuch a Caſe without ſerious Thought, and mature Deliberation, leſt raſh Engagements ſhould iſſue in broken Vows, and curſed Apoſtacy.

Take heed, O my Soul, that I ben't another Inſtance to confirm the Truth of that Awful Obſervation, of which he *told me weeping*, That many Hot Profeſſors have dwindled into Luke-warm Chriſtians, and ſometimes fell headlong into the Gulf of Profaneneſs and Infidelity. Tremble to think if this ſhould be thy ſad Caſe, and let thy Fear quicken thy Application, that thou mayſt not end in the Fleſh, after having begun in the Spirit.

Yet let me not be diſcourag'd. 'Tis indeed a great Thing to be a Chriſtian; but great is the Grace and Mercy of God, Great is the Merit, and Prevalent the Intercеſſion of my Redeemer, who has pray'd for his Diſciples, that their *Faith fail* not. Great is the Power of the Holy Ghoſt, who can preſerve my Graces, ſubdue my Corruptions, help me Crucify the World, and reſiſt and vanquiſh the Devil. Never forget the Encouragement he gave me to hope, that if my Heart don't reproach me, as acting deceitfully in my Profeſſions and Engagements; and if I will keep cloſe to God in the Way of his Appointments, I need not fear being

Luke. 22. 32;

accepted.

accepted of him now, and having the good Work begun, *carry'd on to the Day of Jeſus.*

But, O my Soul, ſee to it; and again, I ſay, ſee to it, that thou do *with full Purpoſe of Heart cleave to the Lord.* That thy preſent Devotion don't prove a ſudden Flaſh, but having ſet *thy hand to the Plough*, don't think *of looking back.* Remember that awful Text, *It had been better for them not to have known the Way of Righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment.* Let this Word be a Spur to thy Diligence; but not revive thy Scruples. It were better never to communicate, than afterwards to Apoſtatize.

2. Pet. 2. 21.

But will this be a Plea for thy Diſobedience; Conſider, O my Soul, at this Rate, thou ſhouldſt never have been Baptiz'd, never call'd thy ſelf a Chriſtian, never joyn'd thy ſelf to a worſhipping Aſſembly, never heard a Sermon, or put up a Prayer, never given an Alms, or perform'd a Duty of any Sort, ſeeing all theſe will aggravate thy Miſery, if thou prove a Hypocrite, or Apoſtate, at laſt.

Therefore in the Strength of Chriſt, hold on thy Way: Don't decline thy *Lord's Table*, but prepare for it, that being a worthy Communicant here, thou mayſt at laſt be a

Partaker

Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light.

Attempt all this in a better Strength than thy own; ever remembring, that of thy ſelf thou canſt do nothing, and that God's Grace is at once neceſſary and ſufficient for thee.

'Now, O my God, I adore and praiſe 'Thee, that I have been enabled to open 'my Caſe to thy Miniſter; and that thou 'haſt inclin'd his Heart kindly to encourage 'me, wiſely to inſtruct me and faithfully 'to warn me. O may thy good Spirit make 'his Endeavours effectual, that I may re-'ceive Inſtruction and take Warning. I 'am ſenſible of the Treachery and Baſeneſs 'of my own Heart, but I am alſo acquain-'ted with thy Power, and Mercy, and 'Faithfulneſs. Oh! let me not raſhly take 'up a Profeſſion which I ſhall as haſtily a-'bandon, or never live up to.

'Help me to underſtand the Engage-'ments I am going under, that I may count 'the Coſt, and not prove a Fooliſh Builder: 'Help me to Conſider the Difficulties and 'Diſadvantages that attend Religion, and 'the Troubles it may expoſe me to. May 'I ſeriouſly conſider, that I muſt deny my-'ſelf, and take up my Croſs, and follow 'Chriſt, if I would be his Diſciple.

'Yet

' Yet let none of theſe Things move me
' from my Reſolution. O give me ſuch
' near and affecting Views of *the Glory that*
' *is to be reveal'd*, and of that *Wrath and*
' *fiery Indignation* which awaits the Ungod-
' ly: So ſet Death and Judgment before
' me, to impreſs me with a Senſe of the
' Worth of my Soul, and the Emptineſs of
' this World, that I may be fully determi-
' ned to accept a Chriſt, and adhere to him
' with all his Diſadvantages; that I may
' *count all things but Loſs, for*
Phil. 3. 8. ' *the Excellency of the Know-*
' *ledge of Him.* And, O
' may this be my unalterable Perſwaſion.
' Let me never turn aſide, nor go a Who-
' ring from Thee. Oh! let me not wan-
' der from thy Commandments! Let me
' never, like an ungracious Prodigal, for-
' ſake my Father's Houſe, or count his
' *Meat Contemptible.* O never let me de-
' ny or forget that Jeſus, whom I am ſo
' ſolemnly to remember and avouch for
' my Lord and my God. Let the unclean
' Devil never re-enter, and take Poſſeſſion
' of this Soul, which I conſecrate as a *Tem-*
' *ple to the Holy Ghoſt.* I am full of Fears,
' and have reaſon to be jealous of
' my ſelf, but yet I am not void of Hope;
' nor have any Reaſon to diſtruſt my God:

' Thy

'Thy Grace is ſufficient for me, O for *thy* '*Names ſake, lead me and guide me: Put* 'thy Fear into my Heart, that I may never 'depart from Theee.

'And, O let not the Deceitfulneſs of 'my own Heart, the Incumbrances of 'the World, or the Solicitations of the 'Devil, put me by the Deſign I have form'd 'of attending at thy Table: May a Senſe 'of Duty out-weigh a Thouſand Excuſes; 'and Hopes of Gracious Aſſiſtance, and 'merciful Acceptance. ſilence all my 'Fears.

'Yet let me not come unworthily: 'May I never *eat and drink Judgment to my* '*ſelf.* Deliver me from the dreadful Guilt 'of *Crucifying afreſh, and putting to open* '*Shame*, Him whom I think my Soul loves, 'and I deſire to remember, avouch and 'honour. Keep me from the great Un-'happineſs of being Poiſon'd by the Richeſt 'Food, and Higheſt Cordial; of coming 'for a Bleſſing, and carrying away a Curſe. '*Amen*, for Jeſus Sake.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Chriſtian preparing for the Lord's-Supper.

SECT. I.

CONſider, O my Soul, the Day is near, in which I am to appear at the Table of my Lord ! It concerns me to prepare, that I may be a welcome Gueſt, and a worthy Receiver. *To prepare* ! Tho' the Expreſſion be ſhort, it's comprehenſive ; and I ſhall find it implies more Work than can be crouded into a little Time, or done with a little Pains. Let me therefore redeem ſome Time from my Buſineſs, at leaſt from my Pleaſures, before the Week be far advanc'd ; that unforeſeen Occurrences mayn't deprive me of an Opportunity to dreſs my Soul for the Glorious Solemnity, and put me upon the unhappy Plunge of miſſing the Feaſt, or wanting the Wedding-Garment.

And, O my Soul, exert thy ſelf, let all thy Powers be upon the Stretch. *What thou findeſt to do, do it with all thy Might*, that thou mayſt not ridiculouſly trifle away that Time, which thou ſeemeſt conſcientiouſly to redeem.

See to it, that in thy Retirements thou be really alone; that the World don't follow thee into thy Closet; or thy Thoughts fly abroad into the World, and leave a Heartless Carcass to entertain thy God. If thy Mind ben't fix'd upon the Work before thee, thy Retirements will be but solemn Idleness: Or if the World be admitted to put thee by thy Duty, the Closet will be but a more private *Compting-House*.

SECT II.

LET me now, O my Soul, prepare for my Preparations. Let me lay down the Plan of my Design, that I may not be at a Loss how to manage, but may go regularly on without that Confusion of Thought which will lessen the Pleasure and Profit of my Work.

There appears to be several Branches of that Business, which is called by the General Name of Preparation. But before I enter upon particulars, I would first be deeply possessed of the Necessity of the Duty in General; which will quicken me to the greater Care and Seriousness in a Business that so well deserves it.

To this End consider closely, that an unprepar'd Communicant must necessarily be

an

an unworthy one. And the Danger of eating and drinking unworthily is repreſented by St. *Paul* in very Awful Terms; ſuch a one *eats and Drinks Damnation to himſelf!*

Damnation! Tremble, O my Soul, at the Diſmal Thought. Sure it ſhould ſtrike a Chilneſs into my Blood, and a Horror into my Spirit! Can any Tongue expreſs, can any Mind conceive the direful Contents of that Expreſſion? However Interpreters may ſoften it, the Threatning can never be diſarm'd: The Thunder of it muſt needs put a tender Spirit into Convulſions and Agonies, at leaſt affect him to a very high Degree.

To *eat and drink Judgment to ones ſelf* can ſignifie no leſs than falling under the Diſpleaſure of the Living God. And who knows what it is to be the Object of his angry Reſentments, in whoſe *Favour is Life*, and whoſe Wrath is worſe than Death? If I eat and drink unworthily, the leaſt I can expect is Temporal Strokes; I am in Danger of Spiritual ones, and deſerve Eternal Vengeance. Indeed there is Forgiveneſs with God; but ſhall I ſin becauſe Grace abounds? At that Rate, I may venture in Defiance of that Word, *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will Judge*, &c. or commit the worſt of Villanies, becauſe God is *good, and plenteous in Mercy.* Nor

Nor yet ſhall this Thought deter me from my Duty; for upon the ſame Principle I muſt abſtain from Hearing, becauſe that will aggravate my Condemnation if I am found diſobedient. *The Prayer of the wicked is an Abomination:* Yea, *the Ploughing of the wicked is Sin*; and ſhall I therefore forſake the Publick Worſhip of God, or neglect the Buſineſs of my particular Calling?

But, O my Soul, let this Thought affect thee, ſo as to quicken thy Endeavours, that thou mayſt be admitted to the *Lord's Table*, as a worthy Receiver, and return *rejoycing in the God of thy Salvation.* Let the Hopes of this put Life into thy Attempts. Think and think again, how vaſt will be the Advantage of worthy Receiving. What Words can expreſs the Bleſſed Conſequences of a Regular Attendance at the *Lord's Table?*

I may expect to have my *Faith* ſtrengthned by the Repreſentation of my Lord's Sufferings; I may hope to have my *Love* to him enflam'd by the Remembrance of his expenſive *Love* to me; my *Reſolutions* confirm'd, my *Mind* more Spiritualiz'd, and my *whole Converſation* made more Regular. I may meet with ſweet *Peace*, and ſtrong *Conſolation*; yea,

perhaps with Rapturous *Joy*,
1. Pet. 1. 8. *Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* Something that ſhall prove a Cordial under the future Troubles of Life, and in the Agonies of Death too. I may there meet with *Him* whom my Soul loves, and have ſuch Tokens of his Love as ſhall in the Remembrance prove a *Continual Feaſt.*

But however, if I am ſincere, I ſhall not be wholly diſappointed: *My Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* I ſhall get real Good, if not ſenſible; if not preſent, yet certain. I ſhall reap what I ſow, tho' it be long firſt. The Harveſt will be ſure tho' late; and then I ſhall have an abundant Recompence for all the Fatigue of the Seed-Time.

Come then, O my Soul, up and be doing; ſpare no Pains in a Matter that deſerves the utmoſt Diligence, and will well reward it. And that thou mayſt not do this important Work negligently, lift up thy Heart to the Father of Spirits, without whoſe gracious Influences thou canſt do nothing.

'O my God, *the Preparation of the Heart* 'of *Man* is from thee. This I deſire to be 'ſo ſenſible of, as to beg with the ut-'moſt Earneſtneſs that I may be enabled to 'prepare my ſelf ſuitably to ſo ſolemn an 'Ordinance. 'Oh!

'Oh! impreſs me with an awful Senſe
'of the Danger of Receiving unworthily,
'that I may not dare to trifle with Thee,
'the Holy and Jealous God. Make me du-
'ly to conſider the inexpreſſible Advan-
'tage of worthy Receiving; that I may
'not at once ſin againſt Thee, and wrong
'my own Soul, by a negligent Behaviour.
'Direct me in every Step I am to take, En-
'lighten my Mind, Enlarge my Heart, raiſe
'my Affections, Keep off the Tempter,
'keep down my Corruptions; and ſo help
'me in the whole of my Duty, that I may
'have this Token for good, that thou de-
'ſigneſt to meet me and bleſs me at that
'Holy Solemnity! It's a great Thing to
'be duly prepar'd; but *Thy Grace is ſuffici-*
'*ent for me. Let thy Strength be made perfect*
'*in my Weakneſs*, and the Praiſe ſhall be
'thine own.

SECT. III.

LET *a Man examine himſelf*, and ſo *let him eat*, ſays the Inſpir'd Apoſtle: Come then, O my Soul, call thy ſelf to an Account, whether thou art in any Meaſure that which God expects every Worthy Communicant ſhould be.

Have I *Knowledge to diſcern the Lord's Bo-*

dy? Am I appriz'd of the Nature and End of this Ordinance? Has not the Miniſter *beſtow'd upon me Labour in vain*, when he opened theſe Myſteries to me? Has what I have read and heard about this Matter, given me a tolerable Notion of it? I know, a Man may have Knowledge enough, and yet eat and drink unworthily; but yet without ſome ſome good Meaſure of Underſtanding, he can't be an acceptable Communicant.

Do I therefore underſtand the Nature of the Goſpel-Covenant, the Covenant of Grace, of which the Sacraments are Seals?

Do I know how the firſt Covenant was broken, into what a ſad condition the Fall of our Firſt Parents brought their wretched Offspring? How it pleaſed God in Infinite Mercy to enter into a New Covenant, thro' a Redeemer, in which he has provided for his own Honour and our Happineſs? Do I underſtand who is the Mediator, what the Bleſſings, and what the Terms of this Covenant?

Do I underſtand the Relation that this Sacrament bears to that Covenant? That it's inſtituted by the Mediator, to whom *all Power is given, both in Heaven and Earth:* That it's deſigned to repreſent the Bleſſings He has purchas'd, with the Manner in which they

Mat. 28. 18.

they were procur'd and are apply'd: That I am at the Lord's Table to *ſhew forth his Death*: That the broken Bread repreſents his Body, which was broken for us, and the Wine his precious Blood, which was ſhed for us. Our eating that Bread and drinking that Cup, ſignifies that Fiducial Feeding upon him, who is that (and more) to our Souls, that Bread, the *Staff of Life*, *and Wine* that *chears the Heart* is to our Bodies?

Do I underſtand how it Seals the Covenant to every worthy Receiver? How hereby God obliges himſelf to be their God, to pardon their Sins, ſanctify their Souls, and at laſt bring 'em to Eternal Happineſs and Glory. How herein they engage themſelves to Him, thankfully accepting what he offers, and chearfully complying with what he demands. That herein we open our Mouths to God, and ſwear, that we will be his, in the Bonds of an Everlaſting *Covenant*, that *ſhall not be forgotten*; accepting him, and reſigning our ſelves.

Do I know of what Advantage this Ordinance is to every Worthy Communicant? How it is deſign'd to confirm their Faith, to enflame their Love, purify their Conſciences, and comfort their Souls.

Do I underſtand how it produces theſe Effects? not in a Natural Way, nor *meerly* in a Moral One, but by the Powerful Influences of the Spirit, diſpenſed, and to be expected in a Devout Attendance upon the Appointments of Infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs? Let me put to my own Soul that Queſtion which my Saviour put to his Diſciples, *Haſt thou underſtood all theſe Things?*

I muſt confeſs, my Apprehenſions of theſe Things are too dark and confus'd; but I dare not deny the Grace of God, who has given me ſome Acquaintance with theſe Awful Myſteries. And I hope I do deſire to improve in Knowledge, and am willing to receive Inſtruction.

'And O that God would teach me what 'I yet know not, and lead me farther in- 'to the Knowledge of all neceſſary Truth! 'Oh that he would *ſhew me his* Pſal. 25. '*Covenant*; and help me to *grow* '*in Grace, and in the Knowledge* '*of my Lord and Saviour Jeſus* 2 Pet. 3. '*Chriſt!* That he would reveal 'to me, by his Spirit, thoſe *deep Things* of 'God, which the *Natural Man* 1 Cor. 2. '*receiveth not, becauſe they are* '*Spiritually diſcern'd.* O *Father* '*of Lights, who giveſt Wiſdom* Eph. 3. '*liberally and upbraideſt not, make*

me to know the Love of Chriſt, which paſſeth Knowledge, and help me to comprehend with all Saints, the Breadth and Length, and Depth, and Height of it. Amen.

SECT. IV.

COnſider, O my Soul, that meer Knowledge is not a ſufficient Qualification for the Holy Communion. If I have Knowledge to diſcern the Lord's Body, and want Faith to feed upon him, I ſhall return from his Table diſappointed and aſham'd. My Bleſſed Lord has told me, that *Except I eat his Fleſh, and drink his Blood, I have no Life in me.* John 6. Now this I know muſt be by *Faith*, not after a Corporal and Carnal Manner: Let me therefore put that Queſtion to my Soul, which my Saviour put to his Diſciples; *Where is thy Faith?* Do I believe in an unſeen Jeſus? Can my Soul make her Applications to him, and derive from *his Fulneſs, even Grace for Grace?* Am I in any Meaſure acquainted with this Myſtery? And can I underſtand by any Experience of my own, what the Apoſtle meant, when he ſaid, *I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me?* Gal. 2. 20. What ſhould he do at a Royal Feaſt,

that cannot taſte of the Proviſion? Am I therefore taught of God to believe in Jeſus?

'*Lord, I believe, help thou mine Unbelief!*
'I hope I have *taſted that the Lord is gra-*
'*cous.* I can remember when I have ſat
'under his *Shadow with great Delight*, and
'*his Fruit has been ſweet unto my Taſt. My*
'*Soul has follow'd hard after him*, and I have
'Reaſon to *remember his Love more than*
'*Wine.* But alas! I have too much occa-
'ſion for that Prayer, *Lord encreaſe my*
'*Faith! Without Controverſy, Great is the*
'*Myſtery of Godlineſs*; and I am too often
'apt to ſtumble at the Croſs. My Temp-
'tations to Unbelief often find me much
'ſorrowful Employment; and at beſt my
'Faith is but weak and languid. O my
'God, *Perfect that which is lacking in my*
'*Faith*; and when I find its Strength, I
'ſhall not doubt its Reality?

SECT. V.

I Muſt alſo enquire concerning my Repentance. An Impenitent Communicant I know muſt be an unworthy one. That I am a Sinner, is a Matter paſt Queſtion, and that as ſuch I am expos'd to the Diſpleaſure of God; ſo that if he ſhould enter

enter into Judgment with me, I could not ſtand, is what I know and believe. Yea, that the leaſt Sin I ever committed deſerves the Wrath and Curſe of God, both in this World, and that which is to come. But all this is general and common; let me therefore, O my Soul, preſs the Matter cloſe and Home. And,

Firſt, Have I *laid* theſe Things to *Heart?* Have my Convictions been affecting? Have I not only known, but felt theſe Things? Have I been *weary and heavy laden* under a Senſe of Sin? Have I groan'd and trembled under the Apprehenſion of God's Diſpleaſure? Has *Deſtruction from the Lord been a Terror to* me? Has *my Fleſh trembled for fear of Him, and have I been afraid of his Judgments?* Yea, have I been aſham'd of Sin, as a nauſeous, loathſom, filthy Thing, contrary to the Nature and Law of God, and my own Happineſs too; which conſiſts in Conformity to God, and Enjoyment of Him? Has the Remembrance of my Sin fill'd my Heart with Grief, and my Face with Shame? Eſpecially conſidering how it has been committted againſt a God of Infinite Love and Goodneſs? Does this Thought give a Peculiar Accent to my Grief, that I have ſinn'd againſt a Bleeding, Dying Jeſus, and a forbearing

and forgiving God? And does the Apprehenſion of pardoning Mercy, thro' a Redeemer, promote in me the moſt kindly Relentings? according to that, *Ezek.* 16. 63.

In the next Place; Have I been *influenc'd* by theſe Convictions to take up a Hearty and Sincere *Reſolution* of better Obedience? Do *I hate every falſe Way?* and have I a *Reſpect to all God's Commanments?* Oh! let me remember, that nothing is Repentance that conſiſts with an Habitual Love to any Sin, or an allowed Averſion to any Inſtance of Duty, or Branch of Holineſs. Is my Heart and Life chang'd? He that is the ſame after Repentance as he was before, can never be accounted a true Penitent.

O my Conſcience be faithful: Have I *put off the Old Man* with his Luſts, and *put on the New Man*, which *after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs?*

I hope it is thus with me, in ſome Meaſure, that tho' I offend in many Things, I allow my ſelf in nothing, that God in his Word diſallows. But alas! my Repentance is far ſhort of what I know it ſhou'd be, and wiſh it were.

'Oh! that He, whoſe Gift Repentance
'(as well as Faith) is, would carry on the
'Work which I truſt, is begun! Lord, o-

'pen

'pen my Eyes, that I may ſee more of the 'Evil of Sin. Strike this Heart, this 'Rock, that it may more freely bleed at 'the Remembrance of my paſt Follies: 'Confirm my Reſolutions, that I may have '*nothing more to do with Idols*; but may be '*ſtedfaſt and unmovable, and always abound-*'*ing in the Work of the Lord. Search me and* 'try me, *and ſee if there be any wicked Way in* 'me, *and lead me in the Way Everlaſting.*

SECT. VI.

I Muſt alſo Examine my ſelf concerning my Love, an Eſſential and comprehenſive Grace. If I don't ſincerely love the Maſter of the Bleſſed Feaſt, and all the Regular Gueſts, I can't be welcome. Come then, O my Soul, is thy *Heart circumciſed to love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul?* Deut. 36. 6. *This is the Firſt and Great Commandment.* Canſt thou truly ſay, that thy Deſire is toowards Him, and thy Delight in him? Doſt thou love *not in Word and in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth?* 1. John. 3. 18. Has He the Preeminence in thy Soul? Canſt thou ſay, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I can deſire beſides thee?* Pſal. 73. 25. Is Chriſt pre-

cious

cious to thee beyond Compariſon and Competition? And canſt thou truly ſay, *Yea, doubtleſs, I count all Things but Loſs, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord?*

Phil. 3. 8.

Is thy Love to him a *Rational* Love, the Effect of ſerious Thought, and deep Conviction of his tranſcendent Excellency? Has the Spirit of God open'd thy Eyes, to ſee that He is the *Chief of Ten Thouſands, and altogether lovely?* And canſt thou tell what *the Church's Beloved is more than another's Beloved?*

Is it a *conſtant* and *fixed* Love? Not a ſudden Flaſh, or tranſient Paſſion, but a rooted, ſettled Thing, a vigorous Flame, which many *Waters can't quench, nor the Floods drown it?* And tho' thy Love to ſome dear Creatures may unhappily be more paſſionate, yet art thou come to a Point, that thou wilt ſacrifice the deareſt Object, rather than part with Him whom thy Soul loves? But to bring the Matter to a more certain Iſſue; is thy Love *Practical?* This is an Infallible Teſt; for my Lord has ſaid, *Ye are my Friends if you do whatſoever I command you.* Doſt thou count his *Yoak eaſy, and his Burden light?* Are none of his *Commandments grievous?* Doſt thou delight to do his Will, and haſt thou choſe his *Teſtimonies as a Heritage for ever?* Doſt thou find his Love ſweetly

John. 15. 14.

ſweetly *conſtraining* thee to the ſevereſt Inſtances of Self-denial? And art thou fully purpos'd in a better Strength than thy own, that thou wilt *follow the Lamb whither-ſoever he goes*, whatever it coſts thee? If it be thus with thee, thou mayſt chearfully ſay, *Lord, thou that knoweſt all Things, knoweſt that I love thee.*

And as a yet farther Evidence, doſt thou *love thy Neighbour as thy ſelf?* Haſt thou a real Love for all Men, and a ſpecial, peculiar one for thy Fellow Chriſtians? Is there no Man to whom thou doſt not moſt heartily wiſh well, whatever Provocations he has given thee, or Injuries he has done Thee? Tho' thou haſt many Enemies, has no Man an Enemy of thee? If there are thoſe that *hate* thee *with a cruel Hatred*, canſt thou appeal to God, that the Hatred is not mutual and reciprocal? Can'ſt thou ſincerely pray, *forgive our Treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us.*

And as to the People of God, doſt thou honour and delight in 'em? *Hereby we know that we are paſſed from Death to Life becauſe we love the Brethren?* Doſt thou love every Soul where thou ſeeſt the Image of Chriſt? Is not thy Love confin'd to thoſe of thy own Party, or Perſwaſion? But is it unreſtrained and large, as that Catholick Church 1. John. 3. 14.

Church of which thou art a Member? Does this Love engage thee to all proper Acts of Kindneſs and Expreſſions of Brotherly Love? Doſt thou pity and help to the utmoſt of thy Power, all thoſe whom Chriſt calls Brethren, with this View, that what thou doſt for them, terminates ultimately upon him, according to *Mat.* 25? Canſt thou read the *Firſt Epiſtle* of *John*, and thy Heart not condemn thee?

I hope my Love is ſincere.

'But, O my God, how weak and how 'imperfect is it! I even hate my ſelf, that 'I can love thee no more. I abhor my 'ſelf that I love thy Chriſt no better, and 'bluſh to think that I am no more kindly 'affectioned to thoſe whom thou haſt lo-'ved with an everlaſting Love; and with 'whom I hope to live and converſe for 'ever.

'My only Comfort is, that I would 'love thee; I deſire to love thee; I long 'to love thee, even as thou would'ſt be lo-'ved. Lord, kindle my Spark into a 'Flame, and let that Flame be ſtrong and 'ſteady. And eſpecially grant that my O-'bedience may prove my Love to be of the 'right Kind. *How can I ſay I love thee, if 'my Heart be not right with thee?* And for 'thy Sake, may I love my Neighbour, e-'ſpecially the Happy Members of that Glo-

'rious

' rious Family to which it is my higheſt
' Honour to belong. O may I love them
' as my ſelf, and in Honour prefer 'em be-
' fore my ſelf, and think no Office of Love
' too mean for me to ſtoop to, in Imitation
' of Him, *who came not to be*
' *miniſter'd unto, but to miniſter.* Mat. 20. 28.
' *This I pray, that my Love*
' *may abound more and more,* Phil 1. 9.
' and being hearty and fervent
' in this Requeſt, is, I hope, an Evidence
' that I do truly love thee. Oh! let me
' not be miſtaken, for Jeſus Chriſt his
' Sake. *Amen.*

SECT. VII.

I Muſt alſo examine my ſelf concerning my New Obedience. This I know is the ultimate Teſt of all my Pretences. Without it Faith, Repentance, Love, *&c.* are empty Names, and inſignificant Shadows. Is the Will of God my Law? his Word my Rule? and his Glory the End of all my Actions? Do I allow my ſelf in the Commiſſion of no known Sin, or Omiſſion of no known Duty? Is it my conſtant care to *keep a Conſcience void of Offence, both towards God and Man?* Can my Cloſet, my Family, my Shop, my Companions, as well as the Publick

Publick Aſſemblies of God's People, bear me Witneſs, that notwithſtanding my unallowed Failings, I do endeavour to walk in all the *Ordinances and Commandments of God blameleſs?* Am I willing to know my Duty, and careful to do it? Am I thankful for Inſtruction, and Reproof too? And do I count them my Friends that tell me the Truth? Are my remaining Corruptions, and my many Failings, Matter of Humiliation to me? Do I pray for Daily Grace as Heartily as for my Daily Bread? and can I appeal to the Searcher of Hearts, that I am never more in Earneſt than when I pray that I may be *perfect in*

Heb. 13. 21. *every good Work, to do his Will?* That I may be cleanſed from all *Filthineſs, both of Fleſh and*

2 Cor. 7. 1. *Spirit, and perfect Holineſs, in the Fear of the Lord.* That *I may be ſanctify'd wholly, and my*

1 Theſ. 5. 23. *whole Spirit, Soul and Body, be preſerved blameleſs, to the Coming of our Lord.*

I hope it is thus with me in ſome Meaſure.

"But, O my God, let me not be de-
"ceiv'd. If my Obedience be feigned, or
"partial, or Legal, if it do not exceed *that*
"*of the Scribes and Phariſees*, if I have a
"*Form of Godlineſs without the Power*, or *a*

"*Name*

' *Name to live while I am dead*, diſcover to
' me the worſt of my ſelf, that I may be
' upon a Right Bottom, and may get that
' *Goſpel Holineſs, without which I cannot ſee*
' *the Lord*. If there be a good Work be-
' gun, O carry it on to the *Day of Jeſus!*
' and let the ſolemn Ordinances I am pre-
' paring for, be a Means of my Spiritual
' Nouriſhment, and Growth in Grace.
' *Amen*.

SECT. VIII.

I Hope I have been Impartial in my Self-Examinations. And tho' upon Review I find abundant Matter for Humiliation, yet I cannot conclude my ſelf a Hypocrite, but muſt entertain ſome *good Hope, thro' Grace*, that I am a Sincere, tho' very Imperfect Chriſtian, and ſhall be a welcome Gueſt at my Lord's Table.

That which now remains is, that I put my ſelf in as good a Poſture as may be, to meet my Lord at that Solemnity, that I may not provoke his Diſpleaſure, nor baulk my own Expectations. To this End I muſt ſee that every Grace be in lively and vigorous Exerciſe, leſt having *in my Flock a Male, I ſhould Vow and Sacrifice to the Lord a Corrupt Thing*. Mal. 1. 14.

I am ſenſible *Faith* is a Principal and Leading Grace It is the *Subſtance* (or confident Expectation) *of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not ſeen. Without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God.* I cannot queſtion the Being of a God, and the Certainty of a Future State, which are the great Principles of Natural Religion, and preſuppos'd to all Reveal'd. I believe that *God is, and that he is the Rewarder of all them that diligently ſeek Him.* But this is not enough my Lord has ſaid, *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.* No Knowledge of the *only true God* is ſufficient to *Eternal Life*, while Men are ignorant of *that Jeſus Chriſt whom He has ſent.* Come then, O my Soul, let thy Faith in Him be ſtrong and lively. Have I not abundant Evidence, that Jeſus is the *Meſſiah*, the Chriſt of God, that *Him hath God the Father ſealed.* The *Scriptures* of the Old Teſtament *teſtify* of Him. To Him *Moſes and all the Prophets bear Witneſs.* In him there was a full and exact Accompliſhment of every Promiſe and Prediction. In Him are the Subſtance of all the Legal Shadows, and to Him referr'd all the Types, *&c.* He was evidently the *Promis'd*

Heb. 11. 1. and 6.

John 14. 1.

John 17. 3.

John 6. 27. 3. 39.

mis'd Seed, the Shiloh, the *Branch*, *&c.* of the Antient Fathers, who *waited for the Conſolation of* Iſrael. Lev. 1.

Conſider, O my Soul, what a Glorious Teſtimony God bore to Him by a Voice from Heaven, by vaſt Numbers of great, publick, and uncontеſted Miracles; and finally, by raiſing Him from the Dead: Of which He appointed Competent Witneſſes, Men of Ability and Integrity; who could not be impos'd upon in ſo plain a Matter, and who could never be ſuppos'd to practice upon the World, becauſe there was no Intereſt in View that ſhould engage 'em in ſo baſe a Deſign. And it's utterly impoſſible that Men in their Wits ſhould be guilty of the Blackeſt Villany, in Proſpect of nothing but Miſery and Ruin. Beſides, did not *God alſo bear them Witneſs, both with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt?* Heb. 2. 4. To which may be added this other Conſideration; That that Doctrine muſt needs be from God, which has ſo viſible and peculiar a Tendency to make Men God-like, in the Temper of their Minds, and Courſe of their Actions. That Goſpel muſt needs be the *Grace of God* which *teaches* us ſo effectually, *that de-* Tit. 2. 11, 12.

nying

nying Ungodlineſs, and all Worly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent evil World. I find by the Records of paſt Ages, and the Obſervations I have made in the Compaſs of my own Acquaintance, That the *beſt Chriſtians* have been the *beſt Men.* And, O my Soul, canſt thou not bear thine own Teſtimony, that the Intereſt of God in thee, bears a conſtant Proportion to the Meaſure of thy Faith in Chriſt Jeſus? Doſt thou not always find, that when thy *Faith* is ready to *fail*, the good *Things that remain are ready to die*? And on the contrary, Is thy Heart ever ſo pure, and thy Life ſo clean, as when thy Faith is vigorous and lively? Now can any thing be more incredible, than that the Great God ſhould make uſe of an *Impoſture* to renew his own Image upon the Souls of Men? I will as ſoon believe any Abſurdity, as that the moſt Holy God ſhould erect and ſupport his Kingdom in the World by a Lye, and deſtroy the Intereſt of the Devil, by Arts and Methods perfectly Helliſh and Diabolical.

Come then, O my Soul, be *ſtrong in Faith giving glory to God.* It's true, Believing is hard Work; but conſider whence the Difficulties ariſe! from a Corrupt Heart, and a Malicious Enemy: And let this Thought be

Rom. 4. 20.

be a further Evidence to the Credibility of the Doctrine of the Croſs. Why ſhould a baſe Heart, and a buſy Devil, make ſuch mighty Oppoſition to the Work of Faith? If it were not the Work of God, the Enemies of God would never make ſuch Efforts to hinder it: The Devil would cheriſh his own Creature: The World would love its own, and the Fleſh would never expreſs ſuch a Reluctancy againſt the Goſpel, if it were not Spiritual in its Tendency, and Divine in its Original. Therefore, O my Soul, let me form Arguments out of Difficulties, and Pave my Way with the very Stumbling Block that are thrown in it.

It is indeed an aſtoniſhing Thought that God ſhould become Man, and that Man die: *Without Controverſy, great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs*, &c. 1 Tim. 3. 16. But let not this ſtagger thee.

Conſider ſeriouſly that the more awful and ſurprizing the Myſteries of the Goſpel are, the more likely they are to be from God; who can ſcarce be ſuppos'd to declare any Thing but what was extraordinary, and out of the Reach of unaſſiſted Reaſon, with ſuch a ſolemn Pomp, and Train of mighty Works, as were wrought to confirm the Miſſion of our Lord. It would have been Matter of Suſpicion, if Chriſt and his Diſciples had preach'd nothing but what the

Pagan

Pagan Philoſophers taught, and the *Jewiſh* Doctors own'd. And it ſhould recommend the Doctrine of Chriſt to a conſidering unprejudic'd Mind, that it was

1 Cor. 1. 23. to the *Jews a ſtumbling-Block, and to the Greeks Fooliſhneſs.*

Are not theſe Things ſo? Come then, O my Soul, *believe* and be *eſtabliſhed.*

But, O wretched Man that I am, *Who ſhall deliver me from this evil Heart of Unbelief?* It is not bare External Evidence that will produce a Divine Faith. Faith I know is the Work, the mighty Work of God, and produc'd in the Heart by no leſs Power than that which *rais'd up Jeſus from the Dead.* It is *not of our*

Ep. 1. 19. 28. *ſelves; it is the Gift of God.*

'And therefore, O my God, I turn me 'unto thee, in whoſe Hand my Heart is, 'and who canſt prevail againſt the united 'Force of my confederate Enemies; and 'not only begin, but carry on the *Work of 'Faith with Power. I believe, Lord help mine 'Unbelief*, and *perfect that which is lacking 'in my Faith.* Not only propoſe the Ob'ject, but open my Eyes, that I may no 'more queſtion what the Goſpel reveals 'than what my Eyes ſee; that *believing 'in him whom I do not ſee, I may rejoyce 'with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.*

SECT.

SECT. IX.

I Muſt alſo remember my Lord in the Exerciſe of *Holy Love*. And, O my Soul, if thou doſt believe, thou canſt not chuſe but love. View thy Lord in his Glory and Beauty: Conſider Him as the *Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon;* Heb. 1. think of him as the *chief of Ten Thouſands, and altogether lovely*; as one whom all Created Brightneſs, Sweetneſs, Purity and Perfection, does but faintly repreſent; as one in whom all that's lovely meets and triumphs; as one whom the higheſt *Angels* Worſhip, and by whom the moſt ſhining *Seraphs* are Eclips'd, who yet adore proſtrate, and veil before him with more Exultation and Rapture than they would govern a Thouſand Worlds. Think of him as one whoſe Glories no Thought can reach, nor Words expreſs; and whom the Multitude of the Heavenly Hoſt will view with everlaſting Surprize and Admiration, as an Object ever new, and infinitely entertaining, and as deſiring no farther Happineſs than to *be with him where he is, and behold his Glory*. John. 17. 24.

And

And, O my Soul, consider that this Glorious Person, who is in himself so infinitely lovely, has been infinitely kind to thee! Need this be prov'd, or can the Instances of it be forgotten? Did not his Love to thee appear beyond all Contradiction, in his Incarnation, Birth, Sufferings and Death, with all the Circumstances of Humility that attended his Passage thro' this *Vale of Tears, this waste and howling Wilderness*, to that *Better Country*, where he is still mindful of his People, as *ever living to make Intercession for 'em?* He loved thee before thou or Time were. He loved thee when he was on Earth, with a Love *stronger than Death, which many Waters could not quench, nor Floods drown.* He loves thee now he is in Heaven; and tho' he be exalted to the Highest Dignity, far above all Principalities and Powers, and *sits at the Right Hand of God* as *Lord of all*, yet hast thou the same Place in his Heart, and the same Share in his Affectionate Remembrances. Long Absence, great Distance, High Preferment, Multiplicity of Affairs, which impair Common Friendship, have no Influence there. *Having loved his own which were in the World,* John. 13. 1. he does and will love them *to the End*; and that with a Love more Constant, Steady and Regular, than the Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies, and settled

Course

Course of Nature. Nor is this Love of his an Empty Name. Consider, O my Soul, the Glorious Effects of it. 'Tis a Love big with Blessings; Blessings which no Tongue can represent, and nothing here below resemble, but with a great deal of Faintness and Imperfection.

He has *loved me and washed me from my Sins in his Blood.* Rev. 1. 5.

He was *made Sin for me* that I might *become the Righteousness of God in him. He was wounded for my Transgressions, and bruised for mine Iniquities, the Chastisement of my Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes I am healed.* 2 Cor. 5. Isaiah 53. 3.

Being justified by Faith I have Peace with God through him, and by him Access with Boldness to the *Throne of Grace.* Rom. 5. 1. Heb. 4.

To his Expensive Love, as the Meritorious Cause, I owe my *Regeneration*; that I am *begotten again to a lively Hope*: My *Adoption*, that I am call'd a *Child of God*: My *Sanctification*, my *Peace*, *Comfort and Joy*; and finally, my *Hopes of Eternal Life*; which is all that Heart can wish, and Ten Thousand, Thousand Times more; for *the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him, have not enter'd into the Heart of Man,* 1 Cor. 2. 9.

Nor let me, O my Soul, forget who is the uworthy Object of all this Glorious Love, *What am I, and what is my Father's House*, that I ſhould be thus *highly favour'd*? That the Prince of Life, the Living God, ſhould ſet is Heart upon ſuch a *Dead Dog*; That a vile *Worm*, ſinful *Duſt and Aſhes*, ſhould be ſo regarded by him whom *all the Angels worſhip*, whom the whole Creation obeys, and in Compariſon of whom all Created Beings are *as the Drop of a Bucket, and the ſmall Duſt of a Ballance*! *Nothing, yea leſs than nothing, and Vanity*! *Behold what manner of Love* is this! Expreſſion is at a Loſs, and ſilent Admiration muſt ſupply its Place.

Heb. 1.

Now, does not this Love deſerve Love? Whence is it, O my Soul, that thou art no more affected? That in theſe *Muſings the Fire burns* no more? One would think, that upon ſuch a Subject, ſerious Thoughts ſhould exalt even a Spark of Love into a Flame of Tranſport and Extaſy! and whence is all this Coldneſs?

Oh 'tis from my *Evil Heart of Unbelief*! The Things are ſo great that they even exceed Belief! But let me conſider that *God's Ways are not as ours, nor his Thoughts as ours, but more above 'em than the Heavens*

Iſa. 55. 8. 9.

are

are above the Earth! and that his Benefits are in ſuitable Proportion to his own Greatneſs. Royal Favours uſe to be vaſt and magnificent: They give *like Kings*; and what leſs can be expected from the *King of Kings*, the Infinite Majeſty of Heaven and Earth, than what he has pleaſed to appoint for his Favourites! And the more mean the Objects of his Love are, the more Glorious his Bounty! The lower his Goodneſs ſtoops, the higher it riſes! But that it ſhould ſtoop ſo low as me, the leaſt and *leſs than the leaſt of all Saints*, nay the very *Chief of Sinners*; This, this ſtaggers my Faith, and makes me ready to cry out, It's impoſſible, it can never be, That God ſhould love ſuch a Worm, ſuch a Devil as I am! A vile Traitor, that have broken his Laws, deſpis'd his Grace, *quenched* his *Spirit*, *trampled under Foot his Son!* an ungracious Dog, that has turn'd his *Grace into Wantonneſs*, and continued in Sin in ſpite of all Reclaiming Methods? A Backſliding, Treacherous, perjur'd Beaſt! and under the Convictions of all this no more mov'd than a Clod, or Rock! a ſtupid Hard-hearted Sinner! This I muſt confeſs I find difficult to believe; and when I can hope, I wonder at my ſelf that I can venture to do it, and adore the Grace and Mercy of God, that I han't long ago been a *Cain* or

Judas, or at leaſt a *Spira*, a *Magor Miſſabib*, a Terror to my ſelf and all about me, by Reaſon of the Blackneſs and Horror of my Deſpair!

And yet here Infinite Mercy, and Infinite Merit, are a Relief; I will believe that there is Mercy for the worſt, becauſe God has ſaid it, and won't venture to except my ſelf, becauſe God han't done it. *All things are poſſible with God*; he can *forgive frankly* Ten Thouſand Talents, as well as a few Pence: And he will forgive *manifold Iniquities*, and *mighty Sins*, to every penitent, humble, willing Soul. I muſt not deny the Grace of God, and therefore if I do avouch this Character, conſequently I muſt believe. Luke 7. 42.

And then how can I chuſe but love? Oh my Soul, fall with the loweſt Proſtrations, at the Feet of thy deareſt *Jeſus*; and if thou canſt do no better, expreſs thy Love by Sighs and Bluſhes, that thou canſt love him no more.

'But, Lord, I may Expoſtulate with 'my ſelf till I am weary, if thy Grace 'be with-held, and thy Spirit deny'd! *O 'ſhed abroad thy Love in my Heart, by the 'Holy Ghoſt given unto me*! Strike this 'Rock and it ſhall melt, breath upon this 'Clod and it will warm. *Draw* me and

'I

'*I* ſhall *run after thee*. *I* cannot ſay that '*I* do love thee, but *I* am ſure *I* can ſay 'that *I* would love thee. This *Thou know-* '*eſt, that knoweſt all Things*. *I* can appeal 'to thee, that if *I* might have my Wiſh, '*I* would love thee better than any 'Saint on Earth, yea than any Angel 'in Heaven does. *I* had rather love thee 'as *I* ought to love thee than be Maſter of 'all the Treaſures on Earth, rather than 'have all the Monarchs of it at my Feet, 'rather than have all that the World ad-'mires at my Diſpoſal. *I* had rather '(Lord thou knoweſt) die in an Extaſy of 'holy Love, and breath out my Soul into 'the Arms of the Holy Jeſus, than live 'Ten Millions of Years; yea to all Eter-'nity, in the Fulneſs of all Created En-'joyments. O my God, is not this a Re-'queſt after thine own Heart, when *I* 'pray that *I* may love thee with all my 'Soul, and that *I* may not be moſt flat 'and heavy, cold and Lifeleſs, at that So-'lemnity where are the Memorials of the 'choiceſt and moſt glorious Love that was 'ever known or heard of.

SECT. X.

I Muſt alſo, at the Lord's Table, be in a *Penitent* Frame. The Remembrance of my Lord's Dying Love muſt melt my Heart into a kindly *Sorrow* for thoſe *Sins* which wounded and ſlew him. John 53. 10. His Soul was *made an Offering* for my *Sin*, and ſhall not my Heart bleed at the Thought of that bitter Cup in which my Sins were deadly Ingredients, and which for my Sake he drank off, even to the very Dregs! O my Soul, when *I* remember my Saviour, *I* muſt penitently remember my Sins, from which he dy'd to ſave me. My Sins! How wide a Field! How vaſt a Subject! *I* am amaz'd, and ſtagger at the General Proſpect, and muſt be ſwallowed up and loſt in Particulars! Where ſhall *I* begin, and where ſhall I end? Indeed I may begin at the Root. *Behold I was ſhapen in* Pſal. 51. 5. *Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me!* But the numerous Branches exceed Calculation! *I know not the Numbers thereof! The Commandment of God is exceeding Broad*, and in Proportion to it *I* muſt eſtimate my Guilt! What Commandment have *I* not broken? n what Inſtance have *I* not offended? As

to

to my Sins of Ignrance, and common Frailties, *I* muſt only ſigh and ſay, *Who can underſtand his Errors*? For to remember and lament my groſſer Follies will be a long as well as ſorrowful Employment, and take up more Time than my Circumſtances can allow. But, O my Soul, *I* charge thee mourn over the more Heinous Offences of thy Life. Read over thy *Kalendar*, and drop a Tear upon the *Black Days there*.

Pſal. 19. 12.

Biſhop *Wilkins*.

N. *Here call ſorrowfully to Mind ſuch particular Sins as have been more eſpecially Heinous.*

And tho' *I* hope God has forgiven thee, yet, O my Soul, never forgive thy ſelf. O what ſhall *I* ſay? *I Bluſh, and am aſham'd to lift up my Face to thee my God! I* could have no Peace, no Patience, no Hope, were it not for ſuch a Word as that: *The Blood of Jeſus Chriſt, his Son, cleanſes from all Sin.*

Ezra 9. 6.

1 John 1. 7. 5.

I would alſo particularly review my Converſation ſince the *laſt Sacrament*: And here *I* can find Matter enough for Shame and Grief. Oh? Wretch that *I* am, how unſuitable has my Converſation been to

the Profeſſion and Engagements *I* ſo lately made, and the ſweet Experiences *I* ſo much rejoyc'd in, and ſeem'd ſo thankful for?

N. *Here fix your Thoughts upon the groſſer Follies of the preceding Month.*

Was *ſuch* an *Action* becoming what thou didſt ſo lately, at the Lord's Table, pretend and promiſe? Was ſuch a Management worthy of a Chriſtian, and becoming a Communicant? Did the Indulgence of ſuch a Fleſhly Luſt become a Diſciple of the Holy *Jeſus*, the Immaculate *Lamb of God?* Did it become a Sheep of *Chriſt*'s Flock, to wallow like a Swine in that Mire? Was that Pride, that Paſſion, that Malice, Envy, and Uncharitableneſs, ſuitable to thy ſolemn Profeſſion of retaining to him who came to *deſtroy the Works of the Devil? Remember and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more becauſe of thy Shame! Surely I am more brutiſh than any Man, and have not the Underſtanding of a Man!*

Ezek. 16. 63.

And, O my Soul, ſhall not the *Time paſt ſuffice* thee to have acted ſo inconſiſtently and unaccountably? Surely it becomes me to ſay, *If I have done Iniquity I will do ſo no more.*

1 Pet. 4. 3.

more. Let theſe be my ſincere *Reſolutions*; and let me, at the *Lord's Table*, bind my ſelf in freſh Bonds, that my Future Walk ſhall be more Circumſpect; that my *Devotions* ſhall be more Regular, my *Dealings* more Juſt, my *Charity* more Extenſive, and my *Whole Converſation* more Spiritual.

'O my God, this is my full Purpoſe; 'but let me not want that *Grace* which 'alone *is ſufficient for me.* Give me true 'Repentance, let me take up ſincere Re'ſolutions, and let the Uprightneſs of 'my Heart in both, appear in a ſuitable 'Behaviour for Time to come. *So be it* 'for *Jeſus* Sake.

CHAP V.

The Chriſtian at the Lord's Table.

SECT. I.

NOW, O my Soul, the good Hand of God upon thee has brought thee into his Houſe, and ſet thee at his Table! Behold *all things are ready!* See to it that thou be ready to meet and entertain thy Lord.

'*Awake O North Wind,*
Cant. 4. 16. '*and come thou South, blow up-*
'*on my Garden, that the Spi-*
'*ces thereof may flow out. Let my Belov-*
'*ed came into his Garden, and eat his plea-*
'*ſant Fruits.*

'When the King *comes in*
Mat. 22. 11. '*to ſee his Gueſts*, may not
'I be the Man that wants
'a *Wedding Garment*?

'Tis an Awful Solemnity! O my Soul, approach with *Reverence and Godly Fear.*

This is none other but the
Gen. 28. 17. *Houſe of God, and this is the*
Gate of Heaven. Let my Frame be ſuitable, *Spiritual* and *Heavenly.*

'O my God, keep off the Tempter,
'keep out the World, keep down my
'Corruption.

'Let no Luſt defile: Let no Buſineſs
'engage: Let no Impertinent Thought
'divert my Mind, *Unite my Heart*; and
'let it be intent and fix'd in thee.

'Thy *Grace*, O Lord *is ſufficient* for
'me. Let thy *Strength* be *made perfect* in
'my *Weakneſs.*

'*Work in me both to will and do. Streng-*
'*then me with all Might, by thy Spirit, in*
'*the Inward Man.*

'Call up my Faith and Love, and e-

very

' very proper Grace, into lively and vi-
' gorous Exercise.

' *Blessed Jesus, without thee I can do no-*
' *thing. I can do all things thro' Christ*
' *strengthening me. Draw me I will run*
' *after thee.*

SECT. II.

While the Minister is breaking the Bread.

THus was the *Body* of my *Lord* broken? *It pleased* the *Lord to bruise him, and put him to Grief!*

He was bruised for our Iniquities! Isa. 53. 10.

Oh let me view the Representation of his *Broken Body*, with a *Broken* Heart, *and a Contrite Spirit!*

Hard indeed must that Heart be which such a Sight will not affect!

Methinks *I* see his precious Body scourged and pierc'd! It's an affecting Thought, that perfect Innocence should be thus treated! But when *I* consider that this Innocent Lamb was at the same Time *God over all blessed for ever*, and that he underwent

underwent all this for me, what muſt my Heart be if it ben't affected!

And while his *Body* was thus bruiſed, the *Iron* enter'd into his *Soul.* Who can imagine what our *Lord* felt when he cryed out, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?*

See here what an *evil and bitter Thing Sin* is, and how abominable in the Sight of *God*, when no *leſs* a Sacrifice could appeaſe incenſed Juſtice!

Here is Grace! Here is Love! That God ſhould *prepare* his own Son a *Body*, and that in that *Body* he ſhould *bear our Sins on the Tree*!

1 Pet. 2. 24.

SECT. III.

While the Miniſter is pouring out of the Wine.

THus was my *Lord's Blood ſhed for me.*

We are redeem'd, not with Corruptible Things, as Silver or Gold, but with the precious Blood of Chriſt, as of a Lamb without Blemiſh and without Spot.

1 Pet. 1. 19.

If

If the Blood of Bulls and Goats ſanctifieth to the puriſying of the Fleſh, how much more ſhall the Blood of him who thro' the Eternal Spirit offer'd himſelf without Spot, to God, Purge your Conſciences from dead Works, to ſerve the living God. Heb. 9. 13, 14

Oh let me view a Bleeding *Jeſus* with a Bleeding Heart?

Behold the *Fountain ſet open for Sin and for Uncleanneſs! The Blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſes from all Sin.* 1 John 1. 7.

Approach, apply, O my Soul, waſh and be clean. *Purge* with this *Hyſſop*, and thou ſhalt be *clean*; waſh in this Laver, and thou ſhalt be *whiter than the Snow.* Pſal. 51. 7.

What may not be expected from the *Blood of God?* The *Blood* of him that was God? Acts 20. 28.

Oh how freely did he let out his Blood! View with Tranſport thoſe Streams of Love, and think how much thou oweſt to him that ſo freely laid down his Life for thee!

'Oh my God, enlarge my Heart in 'Love to ſuch a Friend; and never let 'my Heart be ſtraitned towards Him,

who

'who open'd his Veins and ſo freely Bled
'and dy'd for me.

'May my Eye affect my Heart; and
'may *I* with the utmoſt Tenderneſs re-
'member what Evidences he has given
'of his Love to me. Was ever Love like
'this!

SECT. IV.

Taking the Bread, &c.

John 6. 48. BLeſſed *Jeſus*, Thou art
that Bread of Life. Thy
49 Broken Body is Food for
Souls. Oh let me by Faith
50. *Eat* and *live*, *Eat and never
die.*

'When *Judas took the Sop*, *Satan enter-*
'*ed into him.* Lord grant, that as *I* re-
'ceive this Bread, Chriſt may enter, and
'take an Eternal Poſſeſſion of my Soul.

Now, O my Soul, take a whole *Jeſus*, with a whole Heart, for a whole Salvation.

Lord, I am not worthy thou ſhouldſt come under my Roof.

I am indeed infinitely *unworthy*, but *I* hope, thro' Grace, not utterly *unwilling*.

O

O were but my Appetite to this Spiritual Food equal to my Need of it, how *wide* would my Soul *open her Mouth*, and how full would ſhe be fill'd! Pſal. 81.

'Oh thou who haſt provided Bread, give 'me an Appetite, and *abundantly bleſs my* '*Proviſion.*

'*Lord, encreaſe my Faith.*

'O let this Bread be bleſt to my Spi-'ritual Nouriſhment, and Growth in 'Grace.

'O that *I* may *receive* 'out of Chriſt's *Fulneſs even* 'Grace for Grace! 1 John.

By theſe Royal Dainties may my lean and withering Soul become *Fat and Flouriſhing.* Pſal. 92.

His Fleſh is Meat indeed. John 6. 55.

O my Soul, accept and reſign; take a *Jeſus* and ſurrender thy ſelf. *My Lord and my God, I am thine, ſave me.*

I avouch the Lord this Day to be my God. His I am, and *Him I'll ſerve.* Acts 27. 23.

Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath bleſſed us with all Spiritual Bleſſings, in Heavenly Places, in Chriſt. Epheſ. 1. 3.

Bleſſed be God for *Jeſus Chriſt.*

Thanks

Thanks be to God for his unſpeakable Gift.

SECT. V.

Taking the Cup, &c.

1 Cor. 11. 25. THIS *Cup is the New Teſtament in my* Lord's *Blood!*

I will take the Cup of Salvation and pay my Vows.

John 6. 55. *Chriſt's Blood is Drink indeed!*

I take this *Cup of Bleſſing*, and O adored be his Love that was *made a*

Gal. 3. 13. *Curſe* for me, that he might fill this Cup with Bleſſing.

O how freely did my Lord

Pſal. 110. *drink of the Brook in the Way!* Remember, O my

John 18. 11. Soul, that Love which made him ſay, *The Cup which my Father hath given me ſhall I not drink it?* It was a bitter Cup to him, and yet he drank the very Dregs of it. It is a Cup of Bleſſing to me, and ſhall *I* not chearfully drink of *it in Remembrance of Him?*

Bleſſed

Bleſſed Jeſus, *Thou haſt drank at the Hand of the Lord, the Cup of his Fury: Thou haſt drunken the Dregs of the Cup of Trembling, and wrung them out*; and haſt put in o my Hand this *Cup of Conſolation. Behold what manner of Love!* John 51. 17.

O precious *Blood, that cleanſes from all Sin!*

Drink, O my Soul, and remember *Jeſus.*

Drink, and mourn over thy Sins and Follies.

Drink, and receive thy Pardon.

Drink, and renew thy Covenant.

Drink, and *forget thy Sorrows.*

Drink, and forgive thy Enemies.

Drink, and triumph over the Adverſaries of thy Soul.

Drink, and *rejoyce in hope of the Glory of God.*

Bleſſed *Jeſus, I* will *remember thy Love more than Wine.* Cant. 1. 4.

Unto him that hath loved us, and waſhed us from our Sins in his Blood, and hath made us Kings and Prieſts unto God, and his Father. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen. Rev. 1. 5, 6.

Bleſſed be God for *Jeſus Chriſt.*

Thanks

Thanks be unto God for his unſpeakable Gift.

SECT. VI.

At the Concluſion of the Ordinance.

Rev. 5. 12. WOrthy *is the Lamb that was ſlain to receive Power, and Riches, and Wiſdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Bleſſing.*

13. *Bleſſing, Honour, Glory, and Power, be unto him that ſiteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.*

Pſal. 84. 5. *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts!*

4. *Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy Courts.*

A Day in thy Courts is better than a Thouſand.

10. *I had rather be a Doorkeeper in the Houſe of my God than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedneſs.*

And, O my Soul, if this Hour has been ſo ſweet, while *I beheld the King in his Glory, and the Land which is afar off*, tho' it were *as in a Glaſs darkly*, what will

will an Eternity in Heaven be! When *I ſhall ſee him as he is, and know as I am alſo known*! When *I* ſhall *be with him where he is, and behold his Glory*! *Make haſte O my Beloved.*

Thus *I* muſt remember my Lord *'till he comes.* Bleſſed be God for ſuch an Ordinance. But O that *my Soul* could *even break for the Longing I have* for that Second Coming; when *He ſhall appear to them that look for him, without Sin unto Salvation.* Heb. 9. 28.

He has ſaid, *Behold I come quickly; even ſo Lord Jeſus, come quickly.* Rev. 22. 20.

In the mean Time, O my Soul, remember where thou haſt been, and what thou haſt been doing. *Thou haſt opened thy Mouth to the Lord, and muſt not go back.* Thou haſt bound thy Soul with an Oath. *Thou haſt ſworn, and muſt perform it, to keep his righteous Judgments.*

Thou haſt *avouched, this Day, the Lord to be thy God.* Be true to Him. Let Him alone be Exalted in thy Soul. Be for Him, and not for another.

'Now, O my God, *I* bleſs thee for 'the Liberty of thy Houſe. *I* bleſs thee 'for the Aids of thy Spirit. The Shame 'of my Misbehaviour *I* take to my ſelf;

but

' but all the Praiſe *I* give to thee. Oh
' by thy Grace help me, as
Col. 2. 6. ' *I have received Chriſt Jeſus*
' *the Lord, ſo to walk in Him,*
' *that where he is, I,* his unworthy Ser-
' vant, *may alſo be. Amen,* and *Amen.*

CHAP. VI.

The Chriſtian in his Retirements, after the Lord's Supper.

SECT. I.

When the Ordinance has been comfortable.

Pſal. 103. 1. 2. 4, 5. *BLeſs the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy Name. Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits: Who crowneth thee with loving Kindneſs, and tender Mercies: Who ſatisfieth thy Mouth with good things.*

How Thankful ought *I* to be, that the Doors of God's Houſe have been open to me, and that *I* have had the Freedom of his Table; *Whence is this to me,* that

that *I* who have long ago deſerv'd to be ſhut up among the *Spirits in Priſon*, and fed with the *Bread of Affliction*, and *Water of Affliction*, ſhould be admitted a Gueſt at ſuch a Feaſt! A *Feaſt of fat things, and of Wine upon the Lees, well refined*! That *I* ſhould *ſee the King in his Glory*, and *ſit with him at his Table*, who might have expected e'er now to have been baniſh'd for ever from his Preſence, and have heard that killing Word, *See my Face no more*!

Bleſſed be God, that he let me live to ſee this Day, this Joyful Day! That *I* was not prevented by a ſurpriſing Stroke, and led Captive by Death into the Chambers of that *Houſe appointed for all living*, long before this!

Bleſſed be his Name, that *I* have been ſuffer'd to live no longer in the Neglect of ſuch a ſweet and profitable Ordinance! That he convinc'd me of my Duty, brought me to Reſolve, and confirm'd my Reſolutions! So that in ſpite of all the Malice of Satan, *I* have *given* up my *ſelf to the Lord*, and to his Church, *by the Will of God*. This is what *I* had deſign'd once and again, *but Satan hindered*. Bleſſed be the *Captain of my Salvation*, that he has hinder'd no longer! That all the mighty Hoſt of Objections he had muſter'd

2 Cor. 8. 5.

ſter'd up, could not deter me from my Duty; that *I* was *willing in the Day of his Power.*

Pſal. 110.

Bleſſed be God that my Natural Sloth, and Love of Eaſe, did not make me baulk a Duty which requires Induſtry, and Laborious Application, in preparing for it: That my Eagerneſs after the World did not make me grudge the Time which a worthy Communicant muſt redeem from his Secular Affairs, for this Solemn Service. Eſpecially that my unbelieving Doubts and Scruples, Fears and Jealouſies, did not put me by my Duty, under Apprehenſions of Unfitneſs and Unworthineſs.

I am alſo bound to praiſe Him for the Aſſiſtance of his Holy Spirit and Grace, That my Mind was in any Meaſure compos'd; That the *Deſire of my Soul was towards Him, and the Remembrance of his Name:* That *I* have Reaſon to hope *I* was ſincere, and acted in the Integrity of my Heart: Tho' *I* muſt bluſh that *I* did no better; *I* muſt bleſs Him *I* did ſo well. *Not I, but the Grace of God with me. Not unto us Lord, not unto us.*

But O my Soul, don't let thy Gratitude be only in General Terms: Review the whole Affair, and be particular in thy Acknowledgments. There may be great

great Love expreſs'd in Circumſtances ſeemingly minute, the Recollection of which may afford great Delight, and does demand a Grateful Reſentment.

I am bound to bleſs my God, that by his Kind Providence he *brought me* to that *Banqueting-Houſe, where his Banner over me was Love.* Cant. 2. 4. That the Doors of his *Sanctuary* were open: That my Lot is not caſt in thoſe places where the *Synagogues of God* are deſtroy'd, his Miniſters *driven into Corners*, and devout Souls forced to gather the *Heavenly Manna*, their Spiritual Food, with the *Peril of their Lives.* Bleſſed be God that by the Favour of our *Governours* (whom the Lord bleſs and preſerve) we may aſſemble together, and *none make us afraid:* That He *prepares a Table for us in the Preſence of our Enemies:* And Pſal. 23. 5. if the Sons of *Belial* malign and curſe us, they cannot deſtroy us, nay dare not diſturb us. Bleſſed be God they can't inſult us and ſay, *Where is now your God?* We may now *go with the Multitude, go to the Houſe of God with the Voice of Joy* Pſal. 42. 3, 4 *and Praiſe, with the Multitude that keep Holy-Day.* Bleſſed be his Name, that we who can boldly avouch

our

our ſelves to be of thoſe
Pſal. 35. 20. that *are quiet in the Land*; are allowed to enjoy our Native Rights, and are not by the Rulers counted Diſturbers of the Publick Peace, or *Hurtful to Kings.*

Ezra. 4. 15. *I* muſt alſo praiſe Him, that no *Evil befel* me, nor *Plague came nigh* my *Dwelling*, which might have *ſhut me up* tho' the *Doors* of his Houſe were open: That my Houſe was not ſhut up, and a *Lord have Mercy* writ over it: That
Pſal. 41. 8. 38. 7. no *Evil Diſeaſe cleaved to me*, nor were my *Loins fill'd with a loathſome Diſeaſe*, which ſhould have confin'd me to my Bed, or Chamber, and forbid my going up to the Houſe of the Lord: That the *Secret of God was upon my Tabernacle*, and no ſore Calamity befel me, that would have unhing'd my Mind, and made me uncapable of attending at the Ordinance, with any Compoſure and Devotion. Bleſſed be God that *I* had not Occaſion for *Aaron*'s Apology, when he had neglected to eat the Sin-Offering in the Holy Place, *&c.* and *Moſes* Expoſtulated with Him upon it.

Levit. 10. 19. *Such things have befallen me, and if I had eaten the Sin-Offering to Day, ſhould it have*

been

been accepted in the Sight of the Lord? Eſpecially I would be thankful that God did not withdraw his Spirit, unchain the Devil, and let looſe my Corruption, ſo that being *overtaken with* ſome Heinous *Fault*, or haraſs'd with ſome grievous Temptation, I ſhould not have dar'd to approach to the Jealous God in that Holy Ordinance; but my *Place* muſt needs have been *Empty*, becauſe an accuſing Devil, and condemning Conſcience, would clamour and ſay, *He is not clean, ſurely he is not clean!* 1 Sam. 20. 26.

I would alſo praiſe my God that I was not diſappointed by his Hand upon the *Miniſter* the *Steward* of theſe *Myſteries*; That Sickneſs or other Calamities, did not diſable him for his Maſter's Service: That God was with him, according to his kind Promiſe: That *Chriſt Jeſus was with his Spirit*, and gave him the *Tongue of the Learned* to ſpeak a *Word in Seaſon*. How awfully did he warn us that we ſhould not preſume to approach without the *Wedding Garment*! How ſweetly did he encourage every devout and willing Soul, to come with *Boldneſs to the Throne of Grace*, and by Faith to *draw Water out of the Wells of Salvation*! How pathetically did he repreſent the

Sufferings of our Lord! -How earneſtly preſs *Faith in his Blood*, and *Conformity to his Death*! How paſſionately did he recommend his Example, and encourage Univerſal Obedience, by diſplaying the Happineſs of thoſe that ſerve and follow him; who ſhall be *with Him where he is, and behold his Glory*! How fervently did he pray for the Effuſion of the *Holy Spirit* upon every ſincere Soul! That God would *remember us*, from the greateſt to the leaſt, *with the Love which he bears to his own, and viſit us with his Salvation*; that never a Communicant at that Table might be miſſing at the *Right Hand of Chriſt* another Day! That we might all *ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God*, and enter into *that Reſt which remains for the People of God*! Bleſſed be God that his Mouth was not ſhut, nor his Spirit ſtraitned, as a juſt Puniſhment of my Sins, whereby I have provok'd him to abridge me of thoſe Privileges I have ſo wretchedly miſimprov'd!

I muſt alſo bleſs his Name, that He *did not deny his Grace*, nor *with-hold his Spirit*, when I approach'd his Table; altho' my Preparations were ſo ſhort, ſo vaſtly below the Standard of the *Sanctuary*,

ſtuary, and my whole Management ſadly defective, nevertheleſs I hope I did meet with *Him whom my Soul loves:* And the Kindneſs of my Lord exceeded my Expectations, as well as my Deſerts. Bleſſed be God it did not fare with me according to the Preſages of my guilty miſgiving Heart. I expected killing Frowns, and to my great Surpriſe, was welcom'd with reviving Smiles. He lift up the Light of his Countenance upon me, ſpoke good and comfortable Words to me, and ſent me *away with Mirth, and with Songs, with Tabret, and with Harp.* Gen. 31. 27.

I will praiſe Him that He *help'd my Unbelief.* That tho' I am *of little Faith*, it was not to ſeek when it ſhould be in Exerciſe, I would affectionately remember his Kindneſs in enabling me to realize inviſible Things, that when I ſaw the Elements, I could look thro' 'em to the *Bleſſed Object* they were appointed to repreſent. Tho' I am apt to be like unbelieving *Thomas*, yet then (thorough my Saviour's adorable Condeſcenſion) I was *not faithleſs, but believing.* He ſo diſcover'd himſelf to my Soul, that I could not forbear ſaying, *My Lord and my God!* Joh. 20. 27, 2.

I thought I no more doubted that *Jesus* was the *Messiah*, Him *whom God the Father sealed*, than if I had been by *when there came such a Voice to Him from the Excellent Glory*; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* I thought I as firmly believ'd his Dying upon the Cross for my Sins, as tho' I had been present at the Awful Spectacle; as tho' I had stood by with the *Blessed Virgin*, and the *Beloved Disciple*. I saw by Faith his Body broken, and his Blood flow; what Inward Agonies his Countenance expressed when he cry'd out. *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* And with how Glorious a Mixture of Majesty, Love, and Sorrow he look'd, when having said *It is finished, He bowed his Head and gave up the Ghost.*

2 Pet. 1. 17.

John 19. 25.

John 19. 30.

I was enabled without any Hesitation, to believe that as He dy'd, so He *rose again, according to the Scriptures.* That tho' He *was dead He is alive, and lives for evermore.* I was almost in my own Mind, a Witness of his *Ascension*, doubting no more of it than if I had

1 Cor. 15. 4.

Rev. 1 8.

been among the *Men of Galilee*, when *He was taken up, and a Cloud received Him out of their ſight*. Acts 1. 10, 11. I was as firmly perſuaded of his *Sitting at the Right Hand of God*, there pleading the Cauſe, and managing the Affairs of his Church; as if my *Eyes had ſeen the King in his Glory, and the Land which is afar off*. Iſa. 33. 17. Yea I could, I thought, look for his Second Appearance (which is to be without Sin unto Salvation) with as much Confidence as if I had heard the Two Angels ſay, *Why ſtand ye here gazing up into Heaven! this ſame Jeſus which is taken up from you into Heaven, ſhall come in like manner as ye have ſeen Him go up into Heaven.* Acts 1. 11.

Yea, bleſſed be God, I was enabled to believe in this *Jeſus* as *my* Saviour. I was encouraged to ſay, This Body was broken for *me*. This Blood was ſhed for *me*. The *Son of God loved me, and gave himſelf for* me. Gal. 2. 20. And tho' I had a deep Senſe of my own Unworthineſs, and had manifold Iniquities and mighty Sins to Mourn over, yet (praiſed be his Name) I was born above my uſual Fears and Scru-

ples, and by a Holy Violence, as 'twere, oblig'd to believe *in Hope*, Rom. 4. 18. tho' *against Hope*. I ſaw my ſelf vile and baſe as Hell, one of the worſt and chief of Sinners; and yet I durſt not deſpair, becauſe I had that Word ſet Home, 1 John 1. 7. *The Blood of Chriſt cleanſes from all Sin*. My dear Lord ſeem'd to ſmile and ſay, *Be of good Cheer, be not afraid, it is I. Come* Mat. 11. 29. John. 6. 37. *unto me ye that are weary and heavy laden; and Him that cometh unto me I will in* Rev. 22. 17. *no wiſe caſt out. Whoſoever will let him take the Water of Life freely.*

Indeed my unbelieving Heart was ready to ſay, *How can theſe Things be?* Can ſuch a Worm be the Object of Everlaſting Love? Can ſuch a vile polluted Wretch pretend Relation to, and Intereſt in the Holy Jeſus, and expect Admiſſion into his Holy Hill? I was like *Jacob* when he heard the News of *Joſeph*'s being alive, and Lord of *E-* Gen. 45. 26 *gypt*, *His Heart fainted, for he believed them not*. But my Spirit was reviv'd when my Lord ſhew'd me the Proviſions He had made for

for my going to poſſeſs the Kingdom: And when I was helped to conſider that nothing is too great to be expected from Infinite Mercy, thro' Infinite Merits, Bleſſed be God I could cry out, *Lord I believe, help thou mine Unbelief.*

I muſt alſo adore and bleſs Him, that *His Love was ſhed abroad in my Heart,* in a Degree beyond what I could have expected; conſidering what a Rock of Ice, what a ſtupid, ſenſeleſs Thing this Heart is. *I beheld* my Lord's *Glory*, and could ſcarce forbear crying out aloud, *This is my Friend, this is my Beloved, O ye Daughters of Jeruſalem.* I thought I ſaw Him as the Church deſcribes Him, in the 5th of *Canticles*, and could heartily joyn in that Acclamation. *Yea, He is altogether lovely.* Oh how did I wiſh for nearer Acceſs to Him, and clearer Views of Him! *My Soul did thirſt for God, for the living God: Yea, as the Hart panteth after the Water Brooks, ſo did my Soul pant after Him.* I could have been even willing to have dy'd in an Extaſy of Love, that I might not have loſt the Sight of ſo Glorious an Object to all Eternity.

Rom. 5. 5.

Cant. 5. 16.

Pſal. 42.

Oh how did the Tokens of his Expenſive Love affect my Soul, and fill me with Gratitude! I thought I could have dy'd a Thouſand Deaths for Him who *loved me and gave Himſelf for me.* And O may *I* never forget how aſham'd and confounded *I* was then, to think of the Sins and Miſcarriages of my paſt Life, When *I* call'd to Remembrance ſome of the many Omiſſions and Commiſſions that are upon Record in my Conſcience, how did my *Heart ſmite* me? Oh thought I, *Is this thy Kindneſs to thy Friend! Doſt thou thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh Creature, and unwiſe!* Are theſe ſuitable Returns to ſuch amazing Love? For which of his good Works has he been thus treated, ſo neglected, ſo affronted by thee? Is it not *High Time* for me *to awake out of Sleep*, to take up more firm and ſteady Reſolutions of better Obedience? Sure *the Time paſt ſhall ſuffice* to have acted ſo unworthy of a Chriſtian, and of a Man, yea to have debas'd my ſelf below the *Beaſts that periſh*, For the *Ox knows his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib.*

Iſa. 1.

Therefore *I* offer up my ſolemn Thankſgiving to God, that He has by his Spirit

rit and Grace enabled me thus to Believe and Love; to Repent and Reſolve. It is He has *work'd in me both to will and do*, and his ſhall be the praiſe. Elſe it had been with me as at other Times, when to my Shame *I* muſt own *I* went to the Table dull, and return'd ſtupid, *I* went dejected and return'd diſconſolate, when the whole of my Performance was meer *Bodily Exerciſe*, which *I* found *profitted nothing*. *I* muſt aſcribe it to his Grace, that it was better with me than uſual; for let others pretend what they will, for my part *I* find that *I am not ſufficient of my ſelf* to any thing Spiritually Good. *In me, that is in my Fleſh, dwells no good Thing.*

'Now, O my God, accept my Thankful Acknowledgments. Let me keep a 'Senſe of thy Love ever freſh upon my 'Soul. And eſpecially help me to *walk* 'worthy of my Profeſſion and Privileges; let me never *tread* 'under Foot the Son of God, Heb. 10. 29. 'nor count the Blood of the 'Covenant, wherewith I am ſanctify'd, an 'Unholy Thing. *Amen.* for *Jeſus* Sake.

SECT. II.

When the Ordinance has not answer'd Expectation.

I Have been at the Table of my Lord, where He uses to meet and bless his People. *I* went with raised Hopes that (tho' infinitely unworthy) *I* should have *Communion with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ*; that *I* should be Richly entertained, and return Rejoycing: But alas how sadly am *I* disappointed; *I* *came to the Pits and found no Water*! *I* am *return'd with my Vessels empty*! *I* am *ashamed and confounded*! *I* had prepar'd a *Song of Praise*, and thought to have clos'd the *Festival* with *Hosanna's to the Son of David*; but Wo is me, *I* am forc'd to *hang my Harp upon the Willows*. *My Feast is turn'd into Mourning, and my Songs into Lamentation, and the End thereof as a Bitter Day*. My Mind was dark, my Heart hard, my Thoughts confus'd, my Affections disor-

1 John 1. 3.

Jer. 14. 3.

Amos 8. 10.

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derd, my Soul and all within me utterly out of Frame; *I* could neither believe, nor repent, nor hope, nor love, nor do any thing as *I* ought to do. *I* try'd and ſtruggl'd with my ſelf in vain. *I* was as it were fetter'd, pinion'd and becalm'd, and my very Heart aſleep.

In the mean Time *my Enemies* were *lively*, the Devil buſy, and the World importunate; yea Ten Thouſand Trifles amuſing and diſtracting me. Pſal. 38. 19.

O wretched Man that I am!

When *I* ſhould have been beſt *I* was worſt! *When I would do good evil is preſent with me!* *I* even tremble to think what a Gueſt *I* was at that Holy Table; and cannot but wonder that the Maſter of the Feaſt did not ſingle me out and ſay, *Friend, how cameſt thou in hither?* That He did not ſay to his *Servants*, *Bind Him Hand and Foot, and take Him away and caſt Him into outer Darkneſs.* *I* am amaz'd at the Patience of God, that He could bear with ſuch Trifling, and did not awaken my drowſy Soul by ſome terrible Judgment: That ſeeing the *Threatning* affected me no more, He did not try Rom. 7. 24. 21. Mat. 22. 12, 13

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what the *Execution* would do, according to that 1 *Cor.* 11. 30. *For this Cauſe many are weak and ſickly among you, and many ſleep.*

I adore the Divine Patience, and will not deſpair of Forgiveneſs thro' the Blood of Jeſus. But *I* cannot *forgive* my ſelf, and am even out of all *Patience* when *I* conſider how ſtupid *I* have been, and how unaccountably *I* have manag'd. I could wiſh the ſevereſt Providence had detain'd me, that any thing but Sin had prevented me from prophaning ſuch an Ordinance, contracting ſo much Guilt, incurring ſuch Danger, and creating my ſelf ſo much Sorrow. But alaſs 'tis in vain, and perhaps unlawful, ſo to wiſh.

Come then, O my Soul, inſtead of ſpending Time in Fruitleſs Lamentations, conſider ſeriouſly what the preſent Circumſtance makes this Duty. Humble thy ſelf deeply before God, and *entreat his Favour.* See if there be any Ground of Comfort, and labour to improve ſo ſad a Diſappointment (if poſſible) to ſome good Purpoſe.

'*God be merciful to me a Sinner.* *I* ac-
'knowledge my *Iniquity*, and deſire to
'take to my ſelf that Shame which is my
'Due. *Againſt thee*, O Lord,
Pſal. 51. 4. '*have I ſinned*, and thou muſt
'*be juſtify'd when thou ſpeakeſt*,
'and

'*and be clear when thou judgeſt.* There
'was nothing wanting on
'his Part. *All things* were Mat. 22. 4.
'*ready. I* found a Table
'ſpread, and a Cup flowing. The Mini-
'niſter perform'd his Part faithfully and
'devoutly, and it was only my own Fault
'that it was not a ſweet and edifying Or-
'dinance to me as well as others. It was
'my own Sloth, or Pride, or Unbelief,
'ſomething or other in my ſelf, that pro-
'vok'd thy Spirit, to withdraw, and caus'd
'thee to deny that Grace without which *I*
'can do nothing. *I* humbly confeſs, and
'heartily lament my walking unſuitably
'to the Vows *I* formerly made, and the
'Favours which *I* have heretofore receiv'd.
'*I* have at this Table *ſworn* and not *perform'd*,
'had *Peace ſpoken*, and yet *return'd again to*
'*Folly*; enjoy'd ſweet Communion with
'thee, and yet forgotten, neglected, and
'provok'd thee: And therefore *I* was juſt-
'ly puniſhed, in my *Beloved*'s
'*withdrawing Himſelf*; Cant. 5. 6.
'that *when I ſought him I*
'*could not find Him*, and when *I called Him*
'*He gave me no Anſwer: I* will therefore
'*aſcribe Righteouſneſs to my Maker, I* will
'*abhor my ſelf, and repent in Duſt and Aſh-*
'*es.* Lord forgive me that my Preparati-
'ons

'ons were ſo ſlight, my Self-Examination
'ſo ſuperficial, my Meditations ſo looſe,
'my Prayers ſo cold, and my Pains in the
'whole ſo little. Pardon me if *I* omitted
'Preparatory Duties, or laid too great a
'Streſs upon 'em, If Sloth prevail'd with
'me to neglect 'em, or Pride to
'truſt in 'em. Forgive me if *I* by
'Eagerneſs in Worldly Buſineſs, Exceſ-
'ſive Indulgence of the Fleſh, in Meat or
'Drink, Sleep, or needleſs Recreations,
'by intemperate Paſſion, or imprudent
'Ordering of Affairs, *I* not only provok'd
'my God, but actually indiſpos'd my ſelf
'for the Holy Solemnity. Or if I have
'been guilty of any Sin that I han't duly
'repented of, if I live in the Neglect of a-
'ny known Duty, or under the Power of
'any unmortify'd Luſt. *Shew me*, I be-
'ſeech thee, *wherefore thou contendeſt with*
'*me*, Humble me deeply, waſh me through-
'ly, and pardon me freely, for Jeſus Sake.
'*Amen.*

But, O my Soul, tho' there be ſo great Reaſon for Humiliation and Self-Abaſement, I muſt not be utterly diſcourag'd, and *refuſe to be comforted.*

I muſt hope that my Heart has been right with God, and that I have not wilfully prevaricated and trifled with Him; therefore ſeveral Circumſtances may be con-

conſider'd, to check my Fears and mitigate my Sorrows.

I do not ſerve a *Hard Maſter*; a Kind and Gracious God can make *Allowances* for that Indiſpoſition which may ariſe from Melancholy, or other Bodily Diſorders; from extraordinary Aſſictions, violent Temptations, *&c.* He *conſiders our Frame*, and knows that *we are but Duſt*, and does not expect the ſame from frail Mortals as he does from the *Angels* in Heaven, and the *Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect*. That kind Expreſſion of my Lord, *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Fleſh is weak*, Mat. 26. 41. may be us'd to comfort Real Humble Chriſtians, tho' it be often abus'd to harden the ſlothful and preſumptuous Formaliſt.

Let me alſo conſider that I muſt not always conclude an *Ordinance loſt*, where the *Affections* have *not been rais'd*. There may be Real Communion with God where there is not a ſenſible Delight. The Sacrament may be bleſs'd to promote Humility, and Real Holineſs, tho' I have wanted ſenſible Meltings, and deſir'd Manifeſtations; yea, it is very poſſible theſe may be with-held on a wiſe Deſign, to carry on the Work of God in my own Soul, which ſeems to require a Variety of Diſpenſations;

ons; as Wind and Rain, Froſt and Darkneſs, are in their proper Courſes equally neceſſary to the Earth as Calm and Sunſhine. Hereby it may be God is teaching me to live more by Faith, upon the Righteouſneſs and Fulneſs of Jeſus; to diſtruſt my ſelf more, and cenſure others leſs; to be more watchful, humble, charitable and compaſſionate than ever. I may ſee Cauſe to bleſs God hereafter for what is ſo grievous now. I ſhall never forget that Saying of my *Lord* to *Peter*, *What I do thou knoweſt not now, but thou ſhalt know.*

John 13. 7.

Beſides, I would remember that I cannot preſently judge of the Benefit of an Ordinance. That which is *ſown in Tears* may be *reap'd with Joy*, tho' at preſent there be but ſmall Appearance of it. The Spiritual Medicine may gradually mend my Conſtitution, tho' it don't operate ſenſibly, or prove an immediate Cure.

However, I have been doing my Duty, and God may accept my Honeſt Intentions, tho' he don't at preſent ſmile upon me and ſay, *Well done good and Faithful Servant.*

And after all, it's ſome Comfort to think that others have perform'd more acceptably, and met with *Joy and Peace in Believing.*

lieving. And I thank God for this Sign of Grace, that I can rejoyce in other's being better, and more favour'd than my ſelf.

But be Things as bad as a guilty Conſcience and an accuſing Enemy repreſents 'em? I will bleſs God that I have had Grace to bemoan my ſelf, lament my Folly, and cry to God for Mercy, thro' that Blood which can attone even for the Heinous Sin of having interpretatively *counted it an Unholy Thing.*

And now it remains that I reſolve ſeriouſly in a better Strength than my own, to manage better for the Time to come. And till an Opportunity offers to make a freſh Effort, let me walk humbly under a deep Senſe of my Sin; let me be more ſtrict and circumſpect in my whole Converſation, and live every Day under the Awe of thoſe *Vows of God* which *are upon me.* In an eſpecial manner let me be careful to *keep my ſelf from mine Iniquity. That* Sin to which by my Conſtitution, Buſineſs, *&c.* I am moſt enclin'd, and with which I am moſt frequently *overtaken.* Let me be peculiarly careful to perform thoſe Duties to which I find a corrupt Heart moſt averſe. This will be the beſt way to retrieve Pſal. 18. 23.

trieve the Loſs I have ſuſtaind. God forbid that I ſhould encourage my ſelf in Future Neglects by any Conſiderations whatſoever; yet I muſt belive that He remembers Chriſt in the Sacrament to the beſt Purpoſe, who under a Senſe of what He has there profeſs'd and promis'd, lives beſt after it: Being well aſſur'd that a Holy Converſation, upon *Goſpel* Principles and Motives, is a better Evidence of worthy Receiving than all the Tranſports and Extaſies imaginable. I would not be ſatisfy'd without being *affected*, but ſurely the principal Thing is by ſo apt a Means to be improv'd and *better'd, to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

Therefore I muſt make it my earneſt and daily Prayer, that God would bleſs his Ordinance to this great end; or elſe my Labour will be loſt, and my Expectations fruſtrate.

And Oh! that he would vouchſafe his Bleſſing accordingly. Grant that I may never forget the Engagements I am under, but upon every Occaſion remember that *I am a Chriſtian*, and have ſolemnly own'd That this Thought may be a Reſtraint from *Sin*, and a Spur to *Duty*, an Antidote againſt all the Poyſonous *Suggeſtions* of the Grand

Grand Enemy of Souls; a Preſervative from the *Ill* Epheſ. 2. *Examples* of thoſe *Children of Diſobedience in whom He rules*; and a Cordial under all the *Troubles* and *Afflictions* of this Mortal Life. May I find ſo great Benefit by thus waiting upon God, that I may long for the Return of ſuch Seaſons, and by *Frequent Communion* with Saints on Earth, be fitted for Better Company in a Better World, when I ſhall *ſit down with Abraham, Iſaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God*, yea *be with Chriſt where He is, and behold his Glory*, which is *all my Salvation, and all my Deſire.* Amen.

FINIS.

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